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The siren call of probability: Dangers associated with using probability for consideration of the future**Author:**

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Highlights

- The paper outlines the dangers from using probability to consider the future
- It discusses the deficiencies of subjective probability as used in Delphi
- It provides some criteria for appropriate use of probability

Abstract

Many tools for thinking about the future employ probability. For example, Delphi studies often ask expert participants to assign probabilities to particular future outcomes. Similarly, while some scenario planners reject probability, others insist that assigning probabilities to scenarios is required to make them meaningful. Formal modelling and forecasting methods often also employ probability in one way or another. The paper questions this widespread use of probability as a device for considering the future, firstly showing that objective probability, based on empirically-observed frequencies, has some well-known drawbacks when used for this purpose. However, what is less-widely acknowledged is that this is also true of the subjective probability used in, for example, Delphi. Subjective probability is

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